

# REWRITE



## *The Magazine of Effective Writing*

Vol. XIII No. 7.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1953.

Thirty-five cents

### "WHY, O LORD, DO I WRITE?"

Do you know what are the motivations that make you want to write? As you sit down and start to do a specific piece of writing, is it clear in your mind why you are writing it and what result you hope to gain by it? The surface reasons behind our doing this story as against another may be very clear to us. "Why I simply had to write this article (or story, or poem)," you exclaim. But look behind that flimsy reason. Why are you a writer at all? Why not an artist? Or a businessman selling bubble-gum? Perhaps now that is your job. But you spend your evenings writing sports stories, or murder mysteries, or fanciful romances. Why?

It is good at this season to take account of stock. To wonder a little about your motives for being a writer. You may discover a secret aspect of your character that you've never suspected. Or one of the reasons mss. have been coming back, at the very least it can improve your technical approach and aid you in that first awful job of getting some difficult idea down on paper. You may begin to understand why editors and critics state that your mss. are "off-trail".

What are some of the reasons we writers do struggle so hard with words. Probably money is the most obvious motivation. But unquestionably no two writers reach for money for the same reasons. The illusion of the hard-boiled and successful writer who never sets a story or article in motion until he estimates how much money it will make for him is a popular one. But it is not a very truthful or reliable one. Most of those fellows worry first about whether "I can make this one stick", let alone make money from it. There is always that gnawing, secret fear of losing the magic touch.

Far more prevalent is the example of parents who write to finance their children in school or clothes. The problem of a college education is a nightmare these days that no fond and aspiring parent can escape. And as late marriages become more popular it looms as a difficult hurdle at the very time when many lifetime salaries are being sharply reduced because of retirement.

And there is another facet of writing for money. Elva and I see again and again men & women who tell us: "I am going to be retired soon. My pension won't support me. I've got to earn money by writing. It is tragic, but an inescapable fact, that many of these people lack any adequate preparation for doing the thing they want to. Mind, I very infrequently tell them they are hopeless. But there is an immense disparity between their ambitions to write for top magazines and an ability to produce very simple pieces for a local or small publication. In an age of scientific precisions, they still believe that writing can be picked up at will, or at the

age when most persons' ability to master new skills is steadily declining. Even scientific folk, who tell me that if a man or woman drops out of his or her specialty for a few months or years today, he is likely to be left hopelessly behind, are no exception to that standard rule of thumb, "anyone can write."

They are among the most persistent in desiring an editor or critic to "just take the ideas and put 'em in shape." (And of course send them the check!) I don't believe they'd put any editor-critic in charge of an atomic pile! But the myth that there is no real relation between ideas and their sensitive, creative development or presentation, hardly ever is thought through clearly by these otherwise mature older people.

The motivation of fame is similarly shaped to fit the daydreams or the personalized problems of individuals not seeing themselves in relation to the larger world of reality. Many persons think only of the glamour used by hard-headed publishers to publicize authors. They think it would be a pleasant life and free of the vexations and restrictions, which clutter the sedentary lives of office workers. So they are willing and eager to try it. In a competitive world it will turn the spotlight on them.

Technically, this lack of a strong motivation is one of the greatest single explanations why mss. are rejected. The author has no real or simulated reason for writing the ms., except possibly personal and completely selfish reasons of personal advancement, on the financial, social or emotional level. The skilled member of the entertainment world early learns to invest his every effort with a strong, driving theme or appeal, which is likely to move the hearts and the minds of a wide segment of the public he serves. Why is it that an actress like Helen Hayes dominates the American stage? Because unlike a number of others, she so effectively effaces herself. She perceives the moral issue or the significant character of the role she brings to life. She gives her public a lift, raising them above the petty jealousies, the follies and mistakes of life.

This, in a word, is the great opportunity and the need of a writer today. As it is of our world. It will survive or fail, depending upon how clearly we see and pass on, and demand of ourselves and our public the best that is in us, and them. Behind all the futile, silly time-wasting, time killing programs that are dinned into our ears by radio, television and the movies, there is the motivation that should fuse all others. All of these "shows" that are not worthy of the name, pay lip-service to it. Most of them, unfortunately, insincerely. The dignification of man. That is the root motivation of this, our free world and of every writer. The age old pearl of wisdom: that as you "save" your reader, you find your own reason for writing.

## REWRITE

Published quarterly by  
Writers' Counsel Service, 50 West Street,  
Lunenburg, Mass.

<u>BE A</u>	<u>William E. Harris,</u>	<u>KEEP</u>
<u>GOOD</u>	<u>Elva Ray Harris,</u>	<u>AMERICA</u>
<u>NEIGHBOR</u>	<u>Editors.</u>	<u>FREE</u>

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 35¢ per copy, \$2.00 per year anywhere in the world. Copyright, Dec., 1953. Reproduction without permission from, or credit to the editors is forbidden.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: to insure continuous receipt of your copies, send us any change at least ONE MONTH in advance. Please give exact change, with old & new addresses.

PROMPT RENEWALS: help us to give you a better magazine. Many subscribers renew for two years or more at a time. Saves Time & Money.

URGE YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE. Because we accept no advertising as a matter of policy in order to report the entire field of writing & selling objectively, we depend entirely on our readers for support. REWRITE is a writer's magazine. Please support it. Use it. Recommend it. Give it. It is your friend.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

Elva, Bill and Billy wish all the members of the WCS Family and their friends, wherever they may be, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the Son of God, whose birth date we celebrate, fill your heart and mind with good resolves, and a loving faith in God. No man needs more.

## "WHICH SHALL RULE...WHICH SHALL LEAD?"

In "Robert M. LaFollette" there is told an anecdote that has point and meaning for today. The young Bob seeking entrance to Wisconsin's State University, chanced to hear a memorable Commencement address by the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, who had "written the epoch-making decision sustaining the Granger law, which helped to lay the foundation for judicial action upon corporation control." Said Justice Ryan:

"The enterprises of the country are aggregating vast corporate combinations of unexampled capital, boldly marching, not for economic conquests only, but for political power...The question will arise, 'Which shall rule—wealth or man; which shall lead—money or intellect; who shall fill public stations—educated and patriotic free men, or the feudal serfs of corporate capital?'"

Sen. Robert M. LaFollette, a lifelong defender of the people and a man of exemplary integrity himself, was wise enough to foresee that this conflict is an unending one—that must be won afresh in each generation. "Eternal vigilance," he cried, "is the price of democracy." For he knew well that deliberately fostered hatreds and resulting fear

can confuse and give strange disguises to the fundamental issues of the age-old struggles for power. There are many more and varied enterprises in the community today. The situation, and the need for vigilance, far more complex than in Justice Ryan's day.

The present season is a good one in which to take stock. The off-year elections now are past and the celebration of the birth of the Savior is upon us. Already there is much talk concerning the national elections two years hence. I believe the all-important issue, as it always is, is simple honesty, morality, and statesman-like leadership rather than negative partisanship in high places. More than anything else the American people & indeed, the freedom-loving people of the whole world want integrity, an affirmation of faith, and a constructive, positive program. Mere destructive, stalemate villification of opponents is not enough. That is why Eisenhower had such an appeal and why his party ran so far behind him. The people thought that for once they were going to get a non-partisan, get-things-done administration.

Ceiling on Government Spending. The American people are sick, sore and tired of the blank check, spendthrift type of government it has been getting on local, state and national levels. The greatest innovation, issue, in practical politics would be a party that would put the cart behind the horse, & base spending on income instead of the opposite. It is a misdemeanor for private citizens to draw checks on income they have not got in the bank. Why not for politicians?

Ceiling on Inflation. The American people would vote in for years to come any government with the courage to stabilize earnings and prices; to create a dollar with continuing value; to peg production to use, not to artificial restraints that will hedge in one industry, or protect this management's profits and make work for that union. We have always said there is work enough and profit enough for generations to come, if man would stop wasting his substance on destruction & a sly, secret way to profit at the expense of a neighbor. People working together are always contented and generally prosperous.

Make Democracy Work. We talk a great deal about the American way of life. But in other democracies more people go to the polls. In our courts of justice, delays, legal devices and technicalities, and laws designed too hurriedly, too loosely or with loopholes slipped past the unwary, are ham-stringing, with red tape, our judges and making a mockery of our principles. Do we truly value them?

Derision and lack of faith soon leads one to delinquency, adult as well as juvenile. A sharper emphasis on true values, on the old fashioned morality and creative ideals upon which this nation was founded, alone will now be the saving link. Which shall rule us?

## REWRITE

### THE FICTION WORKSHOPS

Next Workshop: "My Most Unforgettable Character". Remember: draw us a picture in about 150 words. And then on a separate sheet tell us how you would like to use him in print..  
Deadline: Feb. 10, 1954.

And if you haven't already sent in a comment about Mrs. Flint's Story Opening shown below, do so. Every contribution must be accompanied by a comment of the other fellows ms. \$1 paid for each practice ms. used.

#### STORY OPENING

Holly turned her ring twice around before she answered. Then she shook back her curls and smiled at Florence.

"Maybe I am foolish, but I'm not the fair weather type. When I got engaged to Dave, I meant it for keeps."

Florence was looking around the apartment, seeing the bird cage full of plants, the cuckoo clock, the ruffled curtains.

"Cute place you got here, honey—just like you."

"Soldiers are fickle, Holly. When they come back they've outgrown the old girl. They want somebody new. Now I'm not watching my life go up in smoke. I'm going to have fun, and friends, be ready for a new flame, if I lose the old -- love insurance, you know--"

Holly laughed. "You got some other girl for your foursome tonight."

"I'll stop by at seven. Remember it's that home talent show. A lot of the girls are in it. You don't want to be a draft widow dragging along with one of your neighbors do you?"

Marjorie McClellan Flint

Mildred Revercomb thinks Holly is a little too "cute" and tentative in her reply to Florence's invitation. She thinks story interest would be heightened "if the reader knew that Holly in her own mind is doubtful as to Dave's fidelity." She also would like to complicate it more: put Holly under moral obligation to Florence. Make Holly feel it's necessary to help her out when she has two men to entertain. "How about personifying and identifying this "date"? Let Florence picture him as an attractive and worthwhile guy who can make her forget all entangling alliances—something she does not want to face on an evening when she feeling low. Maybe she's already seen Holly, liked what he saw and declared his intentions. Let's get something, a definite plot possibility, going."

Bessie H. Hartling likes the idea but admits it does not indicate much action, & so might lack appeal. "We get the situation, a clearly defined opening. But we aren't really introduced to Holly or Florence. It is all in the mind. We don't know who they are, or how they dress, where they are or where they are going." She thinks "Home talent" doesn't really tell you much, lacks color. And the story might better open at seven o'clock and so get started at once.

Sue Magee would like to see it start with "some of the conversation in the 5th paragraph, then flash back briefly to Holly's idea of being engaged and true to one man."

Ruby Pease objected to the cliché plot. In too many newspaper and fiction stories, too, it is used too frequently. She believes the story that "amuses or inspires" is in greater demand by readers. She would substitute, she thinks, the career girl vs. absent boyfriend as a stronger theme.

Sadie Fuller Seagrave wrote a longish rewrite, the purpose of which was to add Margo, a sophisticated siren intent on getting Dave away from Holly. Sadie also thinks that Florence, the victim of such an encounter is trying to protect Holly, little and cute and incapable of protecting herself. (The twist being, I suppose, that Holly can take care of herself.) This needs careful handling, lest it also become a cliché "romantic" plot.

Mrs. Florence Anderson thinks the opening paragraph "seems very weak, almost unnecessary. The action is too slight. Why not open with the second paragraph?" She adds it has always been her understanding that in a first 100 words there should be description of the MC "for identification". She is "completely guessing as to which girl is to end up as the MC. How many felt that way?"

Lillian Malloy did not think the story opening aroused "any interest in me". Or suggested "any problem, conflict or goal." She did not feel there was any point in reading further. "And that's bad." She was not clear as to what the date was to be like. Bridge or a talent show? Where?

Here is her rewrite: "It came as a distinct shock, this sudden, unexpected feeling of indecision. Always, Holly Tomkins had been so sure that no temptation would be strong enough to violate her self-imposed promise to Dave when he had left for Korea (or wherever)."

Now she was no longer sure. Indeed, she was a little frightened. Twisting her ring nervously, she turned to answer Florence's challenging invitation. To her horror she found that, even as she opened her mouth to speak, she didn't know just what her answer would be! ... (Neither do I. But I think it would keep me reading to find out what the answer would be and whether she would or would not yield to or conquer that temptation.)"

There are the comments. You should weigh, and decide in your own mind, their worth to Mrs. Flint, and you, in their suggestions. I think that Mrs. Malloy in her rewrite alone puts her finger on the weakness of this ms. and many mss. by inexperienced writers. She gets into Holly in spite or wordiness. For she is thinking of inner and emotional, moral values. Those intangibles which everyone uses in making dramatic decisions.



## REWRITE

### FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

#### THE POETS WORKSHOP

For discussion this month:

##### THE QUARREL

No word of ours  
Released the echoes in this room  
Where we are strangely silent.  
From her walnut frame  
My crayoned aunt  
Regards our deafness—  
Head bent a little, considers  
Our obstinate pride.  
(For thirty lonely years  
She wore her pride like a jewel.)  
The walls are shouting at us—  
Your ears must ring with the din,  
My heart will burst  
With the sound in this room;  
Yet neither of us will hearken;  
Will say, "I was wrong--forgive me!"

Mary Billings

The comments are interesting this month as much for their differences of opinion as for their agreements. The first one comes from a new member of the Workshop, Sadie Fuller See of Iowa City, Iowa. She says:

"The poem might be more effective if told as something that had happened, rather than something that was happening. The word 'pride' occurs twice in too close succession. I suggest a change of title: 'Dark Silence'.

"In line 12, the antecedent to the word 'your' confused me. But it surely must refer to the aunt, and if so, should be changed to 'her', otherwise there is a mixture of third person and second person. However, there is confusion even then in line 16, since 'us' obviously refers to the second member of the quarrel. There should be something explanatory, before the last two lines. The idea of this poem is excellent. I can see those two lovers keeping silent, and crayoned aunt longing for them to make up!"

From Bertha Fairbanks: "Mary Billings has an idea for a poem, but I can't find rhyme, or rhythm, in it. It doesn't leave me feeling sorry for anyone. I think the sentences are too sharp and abrupt. I would assume the quarrel is over and that the Aunt has died. In the 10th line she says, 'She wore her pride' and there seems to be only her picture left. You can't quarrel with the dead or a picture. I think it could be made into a poem of 'Regret'.

Mary Lothrop: "I like this one. It has a true-to-life content and is very eloquent. I could not quite see where 'deafness' fitted as there was nothing to hear but silence. I substituted 'muteness' and it seemed to mean more to me that way. Are we to conclude that the 'crayoned aunt' also had a silent period in her life that caused her unhappiness?"

Clarence C. Adams: "This poem is vague..."

It does not seem to arrive at its destination. It lacks the rhythm that is so necessary in a poem. In other words it is a group of prose sentences. Some are poorly connected to the thought. I would re-arrange wording a bit to get it more into the rhythm and swing it needs and deserves. The thought is good but terribly hidden. Possibly the title should be, 'Obstinate Pride'. Or perhaps a title like 'False Pride's Sting' would give the idea better. 'The Quarrel' seems trite."

Theda L. Pobst: "I like the short line to begin the poem. In line 2 wouldn't 'release' or, 'has released' agree better with the other verbs? Line 3 could be left out with little loss of meaning. The middle section has good quality to it, with the five lines just before the last one showing much vivid emotion. The last line seems to me to drop back into prose. Could this be remedied by leaving out 'I was wrong'? I would also suggest leaving out 'head bent a little'. Sounds awkward and throws off the cadence. If you belong to the Amy Lowell school of thought, then there are too many iambs for good free verse. But that could be remedied without losing the imagery or emotional effect. After revising try it on AMERICAN WEAVE, VARIATION & others of like type.

Alice B. Lazo: "I like the title. I like inference in 'For thirty lonely years... She wore her pride like a jewel'. Was it a haunted house, thus to bring up echoes in inhabited dwellings? Why strangely silent? I am, I confess, always silent when I am angry. So that does not seem strange to me. Maybe it should be unusually silent. Your aunt could see if you weren't talking, but could she as easily see deafness? Is deafness visible?... Maybe seeming deafness. About what are those dumb walls shouting? Your aunt regarded your deafness, now how can your ears ring with the din? Maybe tension in the room."

Bessie H. Hartling: "This is a gem of a poem. A perfect picture, well developed. One can see, and hear, and feel what is happening in the room. Two young people, following the same pattern as the 'crayoned aunt' had followed before them. Following obstinately, even though she is speaking to them, pleading, nay, shouting at them to desist, yet to yield, to forgive, before it is too late... One wants to join his voice to all the voices shouting to them from the walls. But nothing will break their stiff-necked pride! It is an excellent example of what simple, well chosen concise words can do to impress an idea upon the mind and soul of a reader. The irrevocability of the situation pictured in that poem leaves one with an aching heart.. Let us hope it is not a personal experience. I don't like the phrase, 'my crayoned aunt'. Perhaps the idea could be conveyed in other words. I like the title. The rhythm appears to run smoothly. I think SAT. EVE. POST, or LADIES' HOME JOURNAL might like this poem."

If the Workshop does nothing more for Mary



#### REWRITE

Billings, it will at least serve to prove to her what a varied audience a poet has. This cross-section runs from the literal-minded to those who readily accept figurative usage.. In four cases at least, people were confused as to whom the quarrel was between. And while I am perfectly sure now that Mrs. Hartling's explanation is the one Mrs. Billings intended, I confess that it was not until I had read the poem two or three times that I understood it.

It is not necessarily a criticism of a poem that one has to read it several times to be unmistakably sure what the author meant.. There are two schools of thought about that point. Some people champion clarity and declare that it must be immediately apparent, while others seem to feel that if the meaning of a poem is too easily understood that is a condemnation of the poem. (It isn't only the modern poets, i.e., the recent & contemporary poets, who write so that few readers can understand them. I have lately been reading Edwin Arlington Robinson and as early as 1896 he was writing poems that confused people.)

The important thing to decide is: whom are you writing for? Are you writing for readers who want to work for your meaning, or for a group (and it is without doubt a larger one) that wishes to catch the meaning of whatever it reads the first time. If you write anything for the first, you eliminate the second. If you write for the second, you eliminate at least a part of the first, through lack of interest. But you have to make some kind of choice. You cannot please both.

As for my own reaction to the poem, I feel with Mrs. Hartling that Mary Billings truly put over the feeling of tension in the room and the irrevocability of the situation. I think it is right, and good, she should make use of the words, "deafness", "echoes", and "shouting" and "ring with the din" in a figurative sense. While Mrs. Lazo is correct in saying that what she really means is "tension", she can express that tension far better by the figurative use of words expressing noise. The very contrast between the silence in the room and the "din" within those two people's hearts, helps her to give us a picture of the terribly unhappy feeling any person has when he has quarrelled with someone he loves.

As for the rhyme and rhythm, we must consider that this poem was not intended to be rhymed, and judge it as such. There is naturally a place for unrhymed verse, and certainly it would be wrong to suggest that the author must use rhyme. However, all poems must obviously be rhythmical, but all needn't have the same kind of rhythm. I agree with Mrs. Fairbanks, Mr. Adams and Miss Pobst in that the rhythmic swing could be improved. I do not like the pause after the word, "considers", caused by the line ending. Perhaps "considers" could be included with the next

line. Sadie Fuller Seagrave has suggested in her comment that the second "pride" be left out. She objected to the repetition. I think if it were omitted and an "s" were added to "her", the meaning would be conveyed and the rhythm improved. Also there would be an added emphasis on "hers" that would bring out, even more sharply, the danger into which the lovers are falling.

It's always a problem in writing free verse as to just where to divide lines. One must keep in mind the appearance to the eye, and also the space limitations of the magazines in which he hopes to be published. But even more important is the ear in determining the line endings. Nothing should separate, for example, "burst" from "with the sound". Those words must be kept together. The ear doesn't want to pause after "burst", but to go right on to what is making the heart burst. Suppose we write that line, "My heart will burst with the sound." I think we improve it, but we will make the next one far too short and jerky. Why not add something to that line.. Perhaps a descriptive adjective such as "silent" inserted before "room" would serve the purpose. I agree with Theda L. Pobst that the last line is prosy. I think her suggestion, that "I was wrong" be left out, is an excellent one. Also why not begin the line with: "Neither"? "I was wrong" is inherent in "forgive". The repetition of "neither" would emphasize the seriousness of the quarrel, and the finality of the poem as well as the situation.

I did not object to the title as some members did. If we take the word "quarrel" out of the title, it would be wise to put in the body of the poem for the sake of clarity. I personally prefer it where it is. Using the title to convey the basic idea is a wonderful economy of words.

The subject-matter of the poem is universal in appeal, so choice of markets would depend largely upon how the poem is written. I think after the poem is rewritten along the lines suggested, the best bets would be the better verse markets (magazines), the better newspaper columns, and possibly the women's magazines & newspaper home sections. And don't forget in trying to resell a Workshop poem, to be frank with the editor about the poem's previous history. Some editors do not use a poem that has seen any public use; others do not object to a trial run in a magazine like REWRITE.

Next time we discuss a poem by Sadie Fuller Seagrave. She is the author of 6 books, and has been widely published in newspapers and the verse magazines. She has given many poetry programs before women's clubs, church groups, Rotary, etc., in Iowa, Minnesota, & Florida. She has also broadcasted over University of Iowa radio station. She is grateful for this opportunity to join the Workshop. "I am anxious to have some expert comments on the poem," she says.

## REWRITE

Here is her poem:

### AS THE BOUGH DIVINES

Mary—the name they chose. Were there other names  
Discussed, considered, as in guessing games?  
Did Deborah attract...Rebecca...Ruth...  
When vague surmisings rounded into truth?  
Did neighbors, in a friendly wish to probe,  
Suggest, were there a son, Emanuel, Job?  
Or was it left as time or chance might claim?  
A rose, it's said, by any other name  
Would smell as sweet. What matter then? And yet,  
As the bough divines what fruit will form  
and set  
I like to think Ste. Anne might well have known...  
Mary...flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone.

Sadie Fuller Seagrave

An earlier version containing the following last two lines, was returned from: The CATHOLIC HOME JOURNAL and AVA MARIA:

I like to think Ste. Anne might well have  
pled:  
"The name will be Mary: Let no more be  
said."

Send in your constructive comments. Nobody is too educated or experienced to learn and reader reaction is valuable to a writer at any stage of the game. Deadline: Feb. 10, 1954.

Get them in earlier if possible, and if it can't be got in before the deadline, please send it anyway. They will all be forwarded. The authors continue to express their genuine appreciation of them.

Remember, we pay \$1 for each poem used in the Workshop. Each poem must be accompanied by a comment on the poem currently up for a discussion.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for me to keep up with all the desk work I have to do here at WCS House. So I would like to acknowledge here and now all the mss. & contributions of poems and comments sent in to the Workshop this month and last. If we cannot use your poem and it was accompanied by a return envelop, we will send it back. Like the book clubs, I sometimes like to keep at least one or two in reserve. Keep the poems and comments coming. I am always glad to be remembered and to hear from you.

### SOME POETRY BOOK REVIEWS

TILBURY TOWN. Selected poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson. Introduction & Notes by Lawrence Thompson. The Macmillan Co. \$3.50. A selection from previously published poems—all having to do geographically with the author's home town in Maine, and humanly with

character-traits and emotional problems that are to be found in any community. The accompanying notes are valuable to poets, giving insight into Robinson's mind.

POETRY AND THE AGE. Randall Jarrell. Alfred A. Knopf. \$4.00. An evaluation of poetry and criticism in our time. I hesitate to evaluate an evaluation. Like wearing an apron over an apron.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF W. B. YEATS. The Macmillan Co. \$5.00. A long volume not too interestingly written.

THE COLLECTED PLAYS OF W. B. YEATS. The Macmillan Co. New edition with five plays added. (Price the same as above.)

GOURMET COOKING FOR CARDIAC DIETS. Florence Field. The World Publishing Co. \$3.50. Lists menus and recipes for reducing diet, low sodium diet, low fat diet, low cholesterol diet, and low purine diet.

### NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

In October Elva and Bill were guests when Lunenburg's Ritter Memorial Library was the host to the Wachusett Library Group. Thirty-one area public libraries were represented. Interesting problems and methods for cooperative working together were discussed. A very enjoyable luncheon was served by women neighbors in the Congregational Church vestry. Bill spoke briefly about the writer and his needs.

A few days later Bill, representing Ritter Memorial Library, led off the radio program, "Library Listening Post" (WEIM), with a 3-minute transcribed talk. This is a project of the Wachusett Library Group.

Also in October on a sunny Indian summerish day we enjoyed a day-long visit from Doris, and Phil Merston, and three of the four nice younger generation. We all had so much fun just enjoying each other's company, the subject of writing was hardly brought up, although Doris' plans for next summer's Maine Writers' Conference did come in for discussion. It's going to be a good one.

On the wings of a howling Northeaster, Ed and Evelyn and Patty Cortez came down for a Sunday dinner visit from Durham, N. H. Once again, it was a case of old friends getting "caught up", although we had stopped by not two weeks before on our way back from Maine and inspected Prof. Cortez' latest carpentry project, a new garage.

Over the long Columbus Day week-end Billy caught his first real glimpse of the ocean, when we tramped Ogunquit Beach and the Marginal Way for three days, visited with Susan Ricker Knox, the distinguished portrait artist and climbed over Dave Woodbury's partially completed new house. Watch READERS DIGEST pay for some of Dave's humor about it.

## REWRITE

### A LIMITED MARKET AND A MORAL

The Birmingham NEWS MONTHLY, James H. Couey, Jr., Birmingham, Ala., gives its readership an opportunity to earn small sums with four features:

- (1) "Alabama Chuckles" pays \$3 for jokes, & uses the contributor's name and address.
- (2) "Favorite Sport Thrills" pays \$10 for a reader's account of a remembered sports highlight (preferably in the area). Name and address, but edited by a staff writer and his name is also used.
- (3) "The Long Arm of Coincidence" pays \$10, for a fantastic stroke of fate. By-line, but edited by Henry Vance.
- (4) Sue Scattergood's Cook Page offers not-specified prize for a recipe. Name & address given.

The NEWS also uses three or four poems on a page column entitled "Alabama Poetry". No pay, but a by-line.

Much-Used "Featurette". Under the heading, "The GLOBE Gets Around", WCS Family member, Lydia Lion Roberts wrote an amusing 2-column feature on the "featurette" she wrote for the Boston GLOBE in July, 1950. I reprinted the little "box" feature in REWRITE. Briefly, there is rounded up all of the adventures of Lydia's featurette in being quoted, reprinted & used in a variety of ways. The idea behind it was simply a humorous series of suggestions on how to get time to read a book. Lydia got a lot of publicity, fun and a little pay out of this experience. (You should look up in the Boston Sunday GLOBE, Nov. 15, 1953, this author's gay and humorous article.)

Lydia Roberts has confided to me, and her listings in the B. A. Column in REWRITE back this thought up with proof, that her idea of practical or light featurettes of 700 words are salable in many corners of editorial pages.

The moral is that if you can help people, and/or amuse them, editors will be interested. My first feature article was built around a practical recreational suggestion for Boston. But over and above this, one of the strongest assets you have is a sense of enjoyment in writing. Lydia Roberts' present article exhudes vitality. Yet she still has to "take things easy"!

### NEWS ALONG THE WAY

CHRISTIAN YOUTH, William J. Jones, American Sunday-School Union, 1816 Chestnut St., Philadelphia 3, Penna., is a new periodical that is replacing YOUTH'S STORY PAPER & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PAPER. (SUNDAY-SCHOOL AT HOME is being discontinued, too.)

The circular says that the new magazine's policy will be substantially the same as in the older books. It will be printed in color and will combine primary and young readership. Stories: 2,000 words. Its theme is: "The saving gospel of Jesus Christ and necessity of living in daily consecration to Him"

Mr. Jones writes: "Our greatest needs are for fillers of all sorts relating to Christian work. They should appeal particularly, I may add, to readers of primary and junior age. Fillers appealing to senior-age readership is already available in sufficient numbers."

"Puzzles with evangelical Christian emphases are also sought. Query in case extensive art work is involved."

"We have need for the summer months, next year, of several stories (with late primary and early junior-age appeal). The stories sought should meet our evangelical emphasis, of course." (This will be a smaller market, I fear. Ed)

POETRY, 1020 Lake Shore Dr., Chicago 11, Ill., is fortunate enough to occupy the former Wm. Borden mansion, which it shares with several other organizations dedicated to the arts. Mrs. Borden Stevenson has had it redesigned. A landscaped garden and outdoor theater will make possible poetry readings and production of verse dramas.

WFMT, Chicago, the School of Speech, Northwestern University, and POETRY, are now giving "Poetry Magazine on the Air", a monthly program. It combines a selection of good current verse from POETRY and some of the best in older issues dating back to 1912.

POETRY DIGEST, John De Stefano, 1228 Meriden Road, Waterbury, Conn., is replacing that deservedly popular poetry magazine, QUATRAIN DIGEST. The new magazine, which will not specialize in form or content, appears this month. It is significant that Mr. De Stefano created a public in only a year. Payments are made only in prize awards, but standards are high.

### Tips on Types

If you read with some care the September editorial remarks in SPIRIT as to the "type" of poems the editors would prefer to receive you probably noted that the editors carefully refrained from defining "type." The nub of the matter seems to be that there is no way of "typing" poems for SPIRIT. The editors put it this way: "We are catholic in such matters." And properly so.

But there are a few facts that you may find pertinent to the question. The editors have yet to approve for publication what they call "exercise forms" such as the triole. And if that form called cinquain happens to reach the editorial sanctum the editors express horriification—nothing less. The tanko, haiku and other Japanese verse forms are simply not for them. The editors admit to having published one sestina, but they admit to closed minds when acrostical poems are mentioned. And if potential poets have architectural dreams of verses built to resemble a cross, a heart, a hollow square, a flower or what not—let them cease and desist.

Finally, never—absolutely never—make bold with the question "Do you think I'll ever learn to write poetry?" Might as well ask a Yankee fan what the Dodger chances are in future World Series competition! (The Dodgers isn't dead!) Editors frankly say they don't know and suggest, with some firmness, that if the aspirant doesn't know no one can hope to know.

There it is. Inspiration plus perspiration plus innate resources—only the individual is master of them.



## REWRITE

### PRIZES TO KEEP YOUR EYE ON

Thomas Nelson & Sons, Centennial Juvenile Book Contest, 19 E. 47th St., NYC 17, celebrating its 100th Anniversary, is offering: \$1,500 each for (1) a novel for girls (over 12 years); (2) novel for boys (also 12 years and over); and (3) a non-fiction book (wide latitude as to subject). Write as above for details. Closes: Feb. 1, 1954.

Seventeen & J.B. Lippincott Co., E. Washington Squ., Phila., 5, Pa., offers a prize totalling \$3,500, for a mature junior novel. Write for full details. Closes: Feb. 28th.

Houghton Mifflin Co., 2 Park St., Boston, 7, Mass., offers annual fellowship, \$2,400. Informal description of theme and intention (fiction or non-fiction). Application blank necessary. Annual. Closes: Dec. 31, 1953.

Yale Series of Younger Poets, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., offers poetry book publication to a poet under forty, royalty basis. No limitations. 48 to 64 pages, over 40 lines to a page. Submit ms. Feb. 1-March 1, 1954.

Harper Prize Novel, Harper & Brothers, 49 E. 33rd St., NYC 15, offer \$10,000 for distinguished novel. Rules. Closes: June 1st.

The ARCHER, Box 3857, Victory Center Sta., No. Hollywood, Cal., always has a number of contests on the fire. "Single Limerick" offers \$5 and several merchandise prizes, and closes: Feb. 15, 1954.

Also: "Poems About April", ditto prizes & closes: Feb. 15, 1954.

The Archer gives \$1 for the best light and serious couplets published in each issue.

### THIS CONCERNS YOU!

The next session of Congress threatens to be one that will concern writers, and their income seriously.

(1) A drive is expected to raise the postal rates. That will increase your cost of doing business. The politicians will not decrease their own franking privileges (free use and as some believe, abuse of the mails). They will continue to give the faithful "patronage" jobs under the spoils system. But they demand you pay the deficit.

(2) They also want you to pay more for social security coverage for which few writers, you will find, can or will wish to qualify. You have got to stop writing to collect it.

(3) There is talk of a Sales Tax. That is a neat way to transfer the Excess Profits Tax and the 10% extra Income Tax to the shoulders of those who can least afford to pay it. Under that provision the rich will get richer and the poor poorer...The best way would be to separate gov't. jobs and political debts.

### HOW DO YOU ATTACK?

Typing up the contest news in the previous column, I began to wonder how some of you go at the job of trying to break in. Have you a systematic program of writing, or a practical plan of attack? (See: Eleanore M. Jewett's eminently sensible note about this on another page (Page 10).)

To me, there is no disgrace in any writer being frankly commercial in the sense of going after an editor with money in his pockets that will help the writer to get himself a stake, and thus permit him freedom to try what he wants to do. Katherine Cornell performed in "The Green Hat" and "Dishonored Lady" in order that she could afford to later do the artistic and notable productions she was ambitious to undertake. (The only danger in this is that a craftsman may lose his courage and his discrimination. Materialism has a way of creeping into one's soul & destroying it like a cancerous growth.)

The only disgrace to my mind is to have no plan, or any discrimination which tells one that he is building a house of cards. I see many writers who one year are trying to win large Confession prizes and the next year to do Sunday School juveniles. The year after, I suppose, they will be trying their hand at Science Fiction. One of the most tragic and pathetic sights is the inexperienced writer who, when a new medium such as TV (which for a while is closed completely to the untrained) breaks, immediately thinks that here is his opportunity. He chases money.

In the field of contesting who is it wins most of the big prizes? Mostly experienced, persistent contest fans. Men and women, who for no good reason enjoy the excitement and the thrill. Who have the patience to study, to understand what is wanted and then know-how enough to deliver the goods in a catchy and clever manner. In the same fashion, I've watched writers decide that Confessions, or any one of the several contests and tips we have listed in this issue, offer the opportunity they have been looking for to get an arm in the doorway. They plan carefully.

What I am trying to say is that writers a good many times out of ten become successes because they refuse to admit defeat. They move by indirection. They do not know exactly what they want to say. All they know, let us say, is that they want to be writers. But they intend to be writers and they are sure they are going to push in wherever they can make a dent. They know they haven't the polish and the timing to make them slick writers. So they take stock of what they have to offer. They look about to see where there's a market and a door they can bust in. This very catch-as-catch-can, rough-and-tumble & never-say-die experience gives them a background and a perspective on writing, that eventually serves them in good stead. They increasingly develop a knack of hitting any market, and they learn what they do want to do.

## REWRITE

### A TRADE WRITER THINKS OUT LOUD

The other day we received a neat one page printed memorandum from Haviland F. Reves, a trade paper writer and long term WCS Family member. It was entitled, "Some Basic Thoughts on Business Writing". I have known for some time that he is a professional in his field and that he takes standards of workmanship, on the part of the writer, and of effective reception by editors seriously. He has been concerned on the one hand about lax methods by writers, and on the other by low rates & pay on publication by editors, to name just a few of the problems on both sides. He and I have had friendly correspondence about the subject, and I have advised him.

So the present bulletin is in the nature, you might say, of a personal platform and a means of throwing the whole subject open to discussion. I am sure that if he could promote better relations and higher standards, on both sides, he would feel well repaid for his expenditure of time, energy and out-of-pocket costs. He is one writer who tries to think of the other fellow, whether he is an editor or writer. It seems to me that whether all of us agree with him or not, we ought to thank him for setting up an informal forum, and men of good will on both sides are implicitly required to weigh his words. It is only good business to realize that better & fairer conditions all around bring more profitable results to writers and editors alike.

Reves' first point is that he prefers usually to work on assignment, or at least upon leads furnished by editors. His reasons, I think, make sense. The editor knows about his trade better than most writers and most practitioners of it. For the writer assignment writing saves time he would otherwise, of course, have to spend merely prospecting for possible stories. However, I believe an irreducible amount of this makes for better reporting by professionals as well as those just beginning or less experienced. And it is certainly true that many editors believe inexperienced writers cannot be trusted, even on speculation, with assignment. I also know editors who do not know their beats so well they can be trusted not to miss an occasional newsworthy story.

Reves also thinks that specialization has its merits. It means, he believes, that writers can bring to bear "more thorough" knowledge of the field and adaptability to editorial requirements. This may be true in the business paper field. But I happen to be of the opposite opinion, without wholly knocking down his ideas. Any kind of professional writing today demands precision skills. A writer needs always to know what he is talking about. But even in business paper writing a broad overall knowledge and a general technical command of writing skills often is beneficial. One of the curses of our present day civilization is specialization. A man knows only his own little job and fails too

often to see it in relation to the big, wide world he lives in. I am firmly convinced the politicians and many statesmen today suffer from that type of professional short vision. Intellectual and emotional stigmatism handicap a person far more than the physical variety.

In respect to news coverage, as contrasted with feature articles, Reves thinks that the writer should be handled by a retainer fee, a minimum guarantee. (In trade paper work a writer is often invited or requested to cover certain areas for news. The pay is generally much lower than for features, and when faithfully done by the writer, can frequently consume an amount of time all out of proportion to the income derived. Yet the editor is given territorial representation.) I agree with Reves that once a good man proves himself responsible, a minimum monthly fee, based, say on the average number of words a writer is likely to turn in, should be arranged. This is more satisfactory to both sides. The writer knows he will be paid something, the editor knows he will get better reporting. (Final settlement should be made at the end of each month on actual production, and additional payment should be cleanly made a writer for all features accepted.) In my opinion this practice should be extended also to general reporting on space rates in the general small town and weekly newspaper field where rates are abysmally low and frequently have not been raised to compensate for a certain well known inflation spiral.

Reves has come up with some very interesting figures about a writer's work habits. A writer actively practicing his profession is likely to spend 50% of his time in reading, legwork, research, etc. Reves believes in a 40-hour week, stating that beyond that production deteriorates. That leaves only about 20 hours for actual writing. Roughly, four, or possibly five hours a day, five days in a week. (I wonder how many trade and other authors follow that schedule.)

He assumes (not very soundly, I think) an average trade writer can turn out 500 words an hour of usable copy. And that this earns the author "10¢ per word". This seems rather high to me. And of course it would apply only to the 20 hours when the writer is actually writing. The "profit" made over this period would have to pay for the hours used for "unprofitable" research, etc. Moreover Reves estimates a trade writer's expense as averaging 50% of his gross. This would then, would reduce the net per hour considerably.

Nevertheless, as Reves states: "This furnishes a comparative basis for establishing practical rates." I doubt if many inexperienced writers can dictate any such formulas to hardboiled editors who work on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. But this does give writers a means of estimating what they need to get. And writers should be grateful to this author for thinking about their welfare.

## REWRITE

### FURTHER THOUGHTS ON "NARROWING DOWN"

In the last issue of REWRITE I suggested, in relation to juvenile writing, a method of "narrowing down" on a target. In other words, I said, "you have a rough idea what you want to write about. You look around for an editor and an audience likely to be receptive. By a process of selective, or eliminatory decisions, you square off a target. Then you start to write."

Of course I did not mean to say that that is the only successful or "right" way for a writer to work. Like everything else, where there are two extremes, there are many variations of the norm. Some writers are highly commercial. They start by reading a magazine, then saying to themselves, "What can I write that that son-of-a-gun will surely, and without fail buy?" I have done it quite a few times myself. I have also written the best I knew how and then searched for a market. Charles Rawlings told anecdotes at the Maine Conference about that. Each writer is forced to find the way that suits him best.

Eleanore M. Jewett, popular and successful writer for children, was spurred to disagree with me. As you will see there is no actual disagreement. Rather two minds working on a similar theme, develop a healthy coverage of all angles. Elva and I welcome her generous interest & willingness, good teacher that she is, to share her point of view with the WCS Family.

"To a certain extent I disagree with your first paragraph in "Some Thoughts About Juveniles". I think it is apt to cramp a writer's style and dull one's spontaneity to aim a child's story or book toward a certain market or audience, consciously. Of course one does subconsciously anyway.

"But so many juveniles sound as if they'd been done just that way—for ages 9-12, 10-14, etc. It seems to me that with children's stuff, just as with adult material, except, perhaps, for the 'feature article', one must have something to tell and then tell it the best he can, with a rush perhaps, and then, and then only, do one's aiming and slanting afterwards toward the age the subject matter seems best to suit. Then hunt for the editor or publisher who seems likely.

"Perhaps I am wrong in this but it is the way I seem to have to do. The other method, I have found, stops me before I've begun... (As you see, I was much interested in the entire article or I wouldn't have put up this argument!)"

There speaks the artist. As against writers of the more immediate feature article & filler type of magazine material. I think there is always a slight difference between most magazine stuff and books. Many serials of course later appear as books. There's also the difference in temperament between an

established fiction writer and a prose free lence, particularly if the latter has had a newspaper background, where the tendency is always to write it once and write it well. I do not mean of course that those who write, rewrite and then polish are not just as much artists as the writer with a certain fluent ease of expression. They are often more artistic and painstaking.

It is a fact, too, as many of my students over the years can testify, that I have never subordinated high standards and ideals—the viewpoint of the craftsman, for commercial writing. On the contrary, I have emphasized writing about what a writer knows and likes, and then seeking to strike a compromise with what editors like and their readers seem to want.

Actually, few readers know what they want because their's is for the most part a passive approach. As in fishing you flash a lure and hope it will have what it takes to make the fish rise, so you as a writer are seeking to cook up a dish that will prove irresistible. If it does, the editor will snap, and, presto, you have an acceptance, whether it is along the lines of the editor's ideas of what he wants or not. That is what, I'm told, the learned and psychological advertisers and merchandisers call an impulse purchase.

But it matters little which comes first—the hen or the egg, the creative urge or an instinctive cunning in slanting. The thing that is important is to realize that always there are those three steps that Eleanore is so skilful in implying.

First, you have to develop an idea, which intrigues your creative processes. Like the fish, you have got to be stirred by a lure. Sometimes you develop one that stirs you, by deliberate digging. Sometimes you can think of nothing better than two fellers and that girl; or two girls and the handsome hero. Or the little boy (or girl) who without one moment's hesitation, makes the right decision that is so pure and good, all the readers of the magazine will turn away. And so do you, when suddenly out of nowhere a good idea is implanted in your mind by your sub-conscious and Father in heaven of all harried writers.

Second, you have to find a market for the idea. This may seem obvious to you from the start, or it may gradually be suggested, or you may have to dig. It may even come to you unexpectedly on one of those blind 59th time out lucky "breaks".

Third, your sub-conscious must somewhere, sometime, somehow, create the spark and the instinctive fusing of these two poles which result in the rush of sudden power that only a weary motorist can appreciate when his motor catches on a cold winter morning. It does not matter what order you use to blend these three ingredients, so long as you get



## REWRITE

all three of them into your "formula" or an urge to write. Mrs. Jewett and I are agreed that there is no single successful method of writing. But a writer must get that sense of "rush" that she speaks about, that editors, in their wisdom call "urgency", readers often think of as "excitement", and which our mutual friend, Mary P. Hamlin calls "magic".

So, don't become self-conscious about the way you write (remember the centipede? Who stumbled when someone asked him how he managed all of his 100 feet at the same time?) If thinking of a big dramatic scene is your way of getting started, use it. If starting with two fellows and a girl, and gradually, through hard labor, changing them from undorned types to real life characters, go to it. I think Eleanore and Mary and every author worthy of the name, will sum it up just by saying that any way of kicking your writing powers through those three steps is one of the hardest, and sometimes, the dreariest occupations known to man.

The FREE LANCE: A Magazine of Verse & Prose, Helen Johnson Collins, 6006 Grand Ave., Cleveland 4, Ohio, is listed in the Nov. issue of POETRY. Free Lance Poets & Prose Workshop, an incorporated organization is, apparently, the publisher. I have written for details. You should write for information also before you submit any mss. Know your markets!

Note: not intending to cast any reflections on the above magazine, I would like to generalize that the greatest single source for complaints from writers to us about publications, is the new and often unseasoned market about which writers know little or nothing, but to which they rush a batch of mss!

Here, they think, is a magazine that must be empty-handed. It will take anything they send it. Often the stuff they send is old & dog-eared; obviously, it has been going the rounds for years. These inexperienced writers never stop to wonder whether an editor's ordinary commonsense would lead him to stock up before he announces his plans.

Editors may have the best intentions in the world, but, especially among those who head up little magazines, they may lack the experience and business training to organize the business side of their new undertaking. The writer who does not know why a magazine has been started, and something of the background of a publication and its editorial force, is inviting trouble. He is more to blame, I believe, than the editors when unsuitable mss. are held too long, are mislaid or mistreated. Yet we as editors of a writers' magazine are constantly asked to bail out writers who have rushed mss. out blindly and trusted implicitly complete strangers. We could say the same thing regarding critics, agents, & publishers, especially of the "vanity" variety. Some writers believe everything!

It's part of our job to help writers. But we wish they'd ask us before they leap!

## HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Acceptances reported or seen by us during the past two months:

Robert English  
Article: FOREIGN SERVICE.

Dorothy Holman  
Article: FAMILY HANDYMAN.

Mildred Revercomb  
Juvenile Story: 'TEENS.

Lydia Lion Roberts  
Essays: DAILY MEDITATIONS.  
Article: C.S. MONITOR, The WRITER, Boston GLOBE, YOUR LIFE.  
Featurettes: Boston Sunday GLOBE.

Lillian Everts  
Poems: LADIES' HOME JOURNAL, EDUCATIONAL REVIEW.  
Reprints: PLATFORM (Eng.), MARCHES de FRANCES (Belgium).

Gwynedd Griffith (Ellen H. Smith)  
Poems: The COUNTRY POET, CHRISTIAN HOME, FRONT RANK, CHILDREN'S FRIEND, etc.

Doris L. Gross  
Articles: The MAINE TEACHER

Helen Langworthy  
Articles: Grand Rapids PRESS, FRIENDS, PEN MONEY.

Harry S. Goodwin  
Article: HOME (Am. Baptist Pub. Society)

Mary Grant Charles  
Poems: CANADIAN POETRY, The COUNTRY POET, OREGONIAN, POETRY DIGEST, QUATRAIN DIGEST, Triad Anthology.

Gertrude Durand  
Poems: AMERICAN BARD.

Sadie Fuller Seagrave  
Poems: CHROMATONES, NORTHWESTERN MILLER

## NOTE! AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Starting with this issue REWRITE plans to appear quarterly. The next issue will be on the street about March 1st, we expect. I regret this change, but the volume of our professional work in our WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE leaves us no alternative. REWRITE has been a labor of love for 13 years. The medium is a difficult and time consuming one. I believe we can serve all our writer friends a lot better, if we do not try to do too much. A matter of integrity, as we've often said.

We hope that our many friends living at a distance will continue their membership and remain subscribers. And continue to contribute to workshops as we announce them.

And do keep in touch & tell us your problems. We'll have more time to work on them!

# Stranger in the Neighborhood

RULAND WALTNER

Copyright 1963 by Erma and Vera Waltner

GREGG Calhoun stopped spading the Andrews' garden. His stunned gray eyes hunted for the speaker as the voice said again, "Are you the orphan everyone's talking about?"

A boy who was about Gregg's age was leaning against the fence next door. The early spring sun shone on his sleek, black hair and the brass buttons on the new baseball suit that he was wearing. A ball and a catcher's mitt were in the basket of the shiny new bicycle that he straddled.

"Why should anyone talk about me?" Gregg asked.

In the week that he had been with the Andrews, while the addition to the orphanage was being completed, he had seen no one from the gray house on the north. Mrs. Andrews said that Mr. and Mrs. Pittenger and their only son were away on vacation. She had sighed and added that it was no wonder Butch Pittenger made problems wherever he went. He was in and out of school so much that he had trouble keeping up with his classmates, and he was left out of many things that they did.

Now, as Gregg looked into the half-laughing, half-mocking eyes staring across the fence at him, he knew that the vacation was ended and that Butch had come home.

"Mom says this neighborhood's too good for boarders," Butch told him. "She wants Dad to raise a row about your being here. She says you'll be a bad influence because you haven't got any folks."

Gregg's face burned. "I wouldn't be an orphan if I could help it," he said, careful to keep his voice from trembling and showing how much he had been hurt. "But she needn't worry. I'll be here only a couple of weeks. The Andrews took me because the superintendent's their friend, and he asked them to."

"But they get paid for it," Butch persisted.

Gregg shrugged. "For my board and room," he agreed.

"Then what are you working for?" the other boy demanded. "They've got to feed and keep you, anyway."

Gregg lifted his spade and watched the earth spill in a rich, brown stream as he turned it.

"You've got a home," he said. "So you don't know how it feels not to have one. I like to pretend I belong here; and if you belong, you do things around a place."

"Ses you!" Butch sneered. "You're being an eager beaver so the Andrews'll adopt you! But they've got three-year-old twins, and they won't."

"O. K.," Gregg agreed. "Besides, I'm twelve. Folks think a boy twelve is too old to adopt."

Here is the opening of a serial, published in the Feb., 1952 issue, of WEE WISDOM. I think it offers a number of practical illustrations, that writers can study to good advantage. Read it first for the story value. Then for emotional tone. And a third time for why I stopped where I did. Do you see the form of it? How the several parts fit into a single line of interest?

This story is unified by a problem, a fairly direct one. It is an obvious situation that could easily lose its appeal through its direct, obvious approach—like an adult story about a discontented wife having an affair with a romantic gigolo. Characters that are just types.

The viewpoint, however, helps to make this story warm and personal. Perhaps the boy talks a bit old for a 12-year old. A child can identify himself with the MC. The exaggeration, or heightening, of the effect is acceptable to a youngster because it makes the issue cleaner, sharper, more poignant to a young mind. Billy was strangely silent & moved by this story. He wanted not to discuss it, let it soak in, when we read it together a few nights ago.

You would do well, I believe, to study the viewpoint hard. It seems like a story that is told entirely from the MC viewpoint. But is it? Watch how the author tells the things a little boy cannot quite find words for.

On the other hand, the necessary facts are emotionalized, and slipped, you might say, over under the cover of action, dialogue or the boy's mental reflection resulting from the conflict and the tensions of the situation.

The story never pauses or stops, as in stories by inexperienced writers, to

He hoped that he sounded careless and matter-of-fact. He was not sure that he did, for he wanted a home like this one more than he wanted anything else in the world. His father had been a hero in a great fire that destroyed the factory where he worked. But that was long ago. Gregg was very small when the message came that his father would never be back in the apartment. His mother had held Gregg close, but she had not cried. As the years passed, it grew hard for him to remember his father clearly. But he had his picture and the medal, along with the stories that his mother had clipped from the newspapers and others that she told him.

His mother was like a small, bright candle burning against the shadows; but one day the winds blew too hard against the candle and the bright flame went out. Gregg was older then, and he could remember her well—her laughter and her sweetness, and the bright glow about her that was as much a part of her as her face or body. He could remember so many things she said, but he liked one best of all. It was, "Want things

that are worth while, Gregg. Want them hard. And prepare yourself to have them."

Now that he was an orphan and alone, every day he tried to do something that would make him ready to fit into a home if someone should want a boy as big as he. He had thought a great deal about it, and he had decided that he must be honest and brave and friendly, that he must take his share of responsibility for keeping the place where he lived clean and happy and smooth-running.

He began digging furiously. When he was busy, he was always happier than he was when he sat around, wishing for things that he did not have.

But Butch would not let him work. He began throwing his ball against Gregg's spade, at first idly and then teasingly. Each time Gregg had to cover it with dirt, or to throw it back.

"Cut it out!" he said.

Instead, Butch threw the ball so hard that the spade handle jerked and sent prickles of pain through Gregg's palms.

Anger welled hot in him. He wanted to jump over the fence and return the ball in a way that would make Butch more careful about what he did. But a fight might start trouble between the Andrews and their neighbors, and the Andrews had been kind to him.

"I promised to get this done by noon," he said, "but I can't if you keep on slowing me down."

let the MC "think" back, so the reader can pick up the details, and participate. The action and movement seem fairly natural, even though much of Butch's lines are loaded & the author explains. But the way she does this backs up the pull of story emotion. I

#### REWRITE

did not catch it the first time through when I was reading for pleasure. It was only after I went back and studied the first opening paragraphs. Analyze the 4th paragraph in the first column of the story. Compare the opening sentence with those that follow after it. The latter show Gregg reacting. The first is more nearly the author telling the information. Compare this first sentence in the 4th paragraph with single sentence that forms the 5th paragraph. Do you see what the use of the phrase "half-laughing, half-mocking eyes" does to the narrative? It gives, I think you will agree, life, animation and dramatic conflict to the story. Now it isn't being told, it is happening. The two forces in the story are static, but they are facing each other. There is menace, and hence suspense in the story. The reader wonders what will happen next.

Compare these two paragraphs with the 1st one in the second column of the story. It's Gregg feeling the emotion in the first sentence or two. But notice what happens. The author steps in: "But that was long ago.... Gregg was very small when the message came." That isn't Gregg feeling, reflecting. That's the author standing behind him, looking over his shoulder. Giving the reader a wider, more omniscient viewpoint. Is it objectionable? Could it have been handled from Gregg's viewpoint? See if you can rephrase it. See if you can edit the author out of there, get her outside the story circle, where she really belongs. You will learn something from such practice work.

You can learn a lot also by studying this fragment of a story to see how often action-bits are loaded for a definite reason. Why does the author put in the reference to the spade handle sending "prickles of pain" into Gregg's palms? It doesn't show in what I have reprinted, but this action-bit is once more repeated, with Gregg reacting in quite a different manner from the first time. One answer to my question of course is found in the lead sentence in the next paragraph. It reads: "Anger welled up in him."

There's your drama, conflict. Two forces, facing each other, sparring, action and reaction. One character is stimulated, he reacts and responds—two ways. That means the characterization is revealed and the story's movement is made evident to the reader. He sees the progress he is making in the story. Moreover, you have change of pace. And the change of cause into effect. Action, a change of action resulting in more action and dialogue. But there is the inter-play of a natural physical (sense) reaction, followed by mental reflection, an emotional desire to do one thing, but the lightning quick decision that holds up that response and substitutes another.

This story may not be particularly subtle but the human mechanism and variability that it reveals to the reader is subtle. To my

mind this is the exciting quality of storytelling that so many inexperienced writers, in the stories that I read, overlook entirely. They merely throw action and dialogue & character reflection together. They stir it up, try to color it with "he said" tags and hope it will mean something.

But it does not, because it is all written from the outside. The author dictates the action and dialogue, tells the characters a lot of things he thinks they ought to say & do in the situation he had coddled up. What makes him fail in his intended effect is he does not understand or feel the sensitive & very human inter-play of body, mind & heart in two different personalities. He thinks a story can be dreamed up merely by having his characters scream at each other, and he himself interpose at studied intervals such inuendo as, "he rasped determinedly" and "she sobbed bitterly".

No, there is a matter of "timing" involved. Dialogue and action cannot be conceived mechanically. Adverbs can only heighten the emotion that is already there. The author must feel his story, but at the approximately same time have the detachment and craftsmanship to bring out the impact of the story.

Look again at the second paragraph in the second column of this story. Notice the poetic reference to Gregg's mother. That certainly is not from Gregg's viewpoint. But while it may seem slightly out of true with the rest of the story, I liked it. It made me feel that the author really felt the emotion of her situation. And that if she committed any sin, it was that of feeling this story from a mother's heart rather than from Gregg's. Call that paragraph sentimental if you wish, but read it well and see how words are selected for their emotional effect. The author, who has a firm grasp on good illustrative action, is here devoting time to an internal phase of the characterization. She is showing the "why" and "how" of her Gregg

It is easy enough to create excitement or suspense by brandishing a gun, as radio and TV do ad nauseam. But it is more difficult, don't you agree, to show why men and women, yes, and children, too, can only act & feel secure when they assume a toughness that is not really in their nature? Butch, for an example. Fiction, when you stop to think of it, even relatively simple fiction of this kind, is one of the hardest types of writing to do. Infinitely harder than feature writing. Because the artist must surrender self in favor of his characters, yet remain in complete command of the situation, without seeming to do so. His sensitivity and craftsmanship, & their "naturalness". Fiction is a separate, distinct language. A story really two "languages" in one. The author thinks in terms, first of ideas and emotions. When he has created a line of interest here, he must build another with words a reader can understand.



## REWRITE

### THE MONTH'S NEW BOOKS

**ROBERT M. LAFOLLETTE.** Belle C. and Fols LaFollette. The Macmillan Co. 2 vols. \$15.00. A warmly genuine and wholesome story of an independent statesman, who all his life bucked the vigorous, often unethical opposition of conservative Republicans and powerful interests. An eye-opener to the average citizen as to what goes on in smoke-filled rooms. Written by his wife and daughter, but fully documented. Good, on the spot reporting.

**FREE-LANCE WRITING FOR A LIVING.** Paul W. Kearney. David McKay Co. \$2.75. This is largely a personal experience book by an author who writes for READERS' DIGEST and big slicks. A good deal of practical background and know-how stuff.

**BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FICTION WRITING.** Margaret Widdemer. The Writer. \$3.00. Margaret with whom I staffed at the UNH Conference, is a prolific writer and a conscientious teacher. This book is an extension of her earlier "Do You Want to Write?" It is helpful and well organized.

**DISCOVERY.** Ed. Vance Bourjaily. Pocket Books. 35¢. The second issue of PB's original book featuring non-slick writing, a few new writers, and quite a bit of verse. It is still in the experimental stage. Although we are not too impressed by the fiction, we welcome an increase in verse content, and hope further experiment will be made in enlarging a non-fiction section. This is the weak point.

**IN TIME OF CHANGE.** Lillian Everts. The Lantern. \$1.00. A prize award collection of varied types of poems previously published in a number of prominent publications using poetry. (May be obtained from the author, 20 Park Ave., NYC 16.)

**PLOT DIGEST.** Kobold Knight. \$4.00. Book on Plotting by an English writing teacher. I've found it very helpful.

**WRITING FOR CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS.** Edith E. Csteyee. \$3.00. One of the best in the field. Every writer for religious magazines should read it.

WE WISH YOU MUCH SUCCESS IN 1954!

### WCS FAMILY MEETING

We are sorry REWRITE cannot provide an opportunity for meeting quite so often. We're clearing our desks of all subordinate tasks except WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE (by which we earn our living) and REWRITE.

REWRITE comes to you a bit late this time because of the number of personal conference meetings we held this month with individual writers. We want to and plan to continue to give our REWRITE readers the full measure of our interest and help in their problems. So please send in your renewals promptly. Help us to help you by keeping in contact.

### BOOKS OF GENERAL INTEREST

**THE BETRAYERS.** Ruth Chatterton. Houghton Mifflin Co. \$3.50. For her third novel this well known actress has chosen the spy theme and has done very well with it. Several of the sensational news stories have served in her plotting. A certain senator is not flattered in her picture of him. But the author has definite ideas about patriotism, liberty and true freedom. In spite of the unnecessary and over-use of profanity, the book has something to say and says it quite skillfully. Our fiction today would be stronger did more novelists and short story writers make so valiant an attempt to handle the broader and more serious problems of our world.

**THE SPRINGS OF SILENCE.** Madeleine de Frees, (Sister Mary Gilbert). Prentice-Hall. \$2.95. A very human and maturely amusing picture of the behind side of a convent. The author can write exceedingly well and she tells unforgettably how fun-loving young girls discover their vocation and mature into prospective saints. Decidedly worth reading.

**THE BEST HUMOR FROM PUNCH.** Ed. William Cole. The World Publishing Co. \$3.50. Nothing is quite so illustrative of the difference between English and American humor as an editorial choice such as this. Or is it a matter of editorial choice? My two favorite selections from PUNCH are not included. (1) a cartoon of a businessman chasing violently, and futilely, an early morning commuters bus. Caption: "We used to have to walk, now we have a bus." (2) Two rather forbidding appearing and elderly British old maids are seen coming out of the Folies Bergere in Paris. One of them remarks to the other: "How very different from the home-life of our dear Queen."

**IT'S GOOD TO BE BLACK.** Ruby Berkley Goodwin. Doubleday & Co. \$3.50. Easy reading about a coal-mining town and the warm, friendly life the author lived there, with occasional exciting tensions.

**OVERCOMING BACK TROUBLE.** Helen Jeanne Thompson. Prentice-Hall. \$3.95. A corrective therapist explains the nature of back troubles, and a number of methods of treatment without ever mentioning osteopaths and chiropractors either favorably or unfavorably. A serious limitation of perspective in the eyes of the layman and some experts.

**THE OLIVIERS.** Felix Barker. J. B. Lippincott Co. \$5.00. A readable picture biography and running feature by an English newspaper critic about the shy and self-critical Sir Laurence and Vivien Leigh. It is apparent the assignment was not easy.

**HOW TO MAKE AND BREAK HABITS.** James L. Mursell. J. B. Lippincott Co. \$3.95. A slightly over-simplified text that gives readers, who like the obvious, popular psychological slant on life, their money's worth in easily digested theory and personal anecdote.

## REWRITE

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Have you ever tried to figure out how big a slice of your "time" goes into non-productive or only semi-productive work? By that I mean work that may have to be done and is done, but which is not actually writing the words that bring in checks. On Page 9 (this issue) Haviland F. Reyes is quoted concerning the amount of time a trade writer has to devote "overhead" activities, which may aid him ultimately in producing salable writing, but do not directly result in mss. that produce checks.

What are these overhead activities? Most obvious, of course, is all the writing that eventually goes into the wastebasket. Such writing takes time. It costs you money that you would be making if you did not spend so much time in writing a ms. twice, thrice or more. The notes and character sketches, etc., that you write for your own information, all the dreaming you do on paper, is overhead & reduces the average amount you take in each hour you actually produce salable words.

The time you spend in filing these notes, and pasting up your tearsheets, keeping the records of where your "out" mss. are and how long they have been out, are also deductible from your net "profit". Even more wasteful, you will discover, if you look at your business with an accountant's eye, is the time you waste pleading with, needling and scolding dilatory "pay-on-pub." editors who hold or tie up your mss. for years, and on occasion even lose them!

Big businesses have special departments & personnel that do nothing but track down the inefficient and hidden ways that overhead & non-productive use of men and materials can cut down the net profit. They seek to eliminate this waste. Why can't writers do some similar pruning? Have you ever tried to examine the unnecessary steps you take in order to complete a salable ms? With a little planning could you remove that particular item that reduces your earning power just as much as if you wasted an entire day away off from your desk?

You will say that writing is an art, not a business. Possibly. But the more you employ business-like methods, more you succeed in getting worthwhile things actually done, the more you put yourself in the frame of mind, the creative enthusiasm, that is the "right" climate for getting good writing done. It's perfectly true that writing is an art, not a mechanical practice, as anyone can discover just by sitting down and trying to produce a salable ms. A girl can sit down and feed the necessary blanks into a machine that cuts or packages razor blades, whether she has lost her boyfriend or not. But a writer is valuable only so long as he can generate enthusiasm to handle a salable idea, and give it a smooth, polished treatment. Pulpsters to the contrary, writing is hand (custom) work!

### MARKET NEWS AND COMMENT

WORLD, Percy Knauth, feature editor, 319 E. 44th St., NYC 17, is a new magazine that also services its readers with an "advisory letter". Mr. Knauth wrote us a very friendly note explaining his needs. These require writers with high level or inside contacts. Special correspondents or V.I.P.s. having access to:

(1) Profiles of important personalities in international news. (Churchill in the Nov. issue; "Three Kings of Indonesia" (Dec.) will give the idea.) He pays \$300 & \$400 for an average of 2,500 words.

(2) Short features (1,000 - 1,700 words) regarding international economy, business and cultural topics of significance. These are more difficult to define. \$75 to \$150 based on length.

Mr. Knauth promises "careful & sympathetic attention" for writers able to hit these categories with good material. Others ought to save his and their time. It is a wise author who recognizes when a market is not open to him and does not try to sell it.

The METHODIST LAYMAN, Shelby E. Southard, 740 Rush St., Chicago 11, Ill. This, too, is largely staff-written or arranged. Three or four lead articles; the rest news and quite a bit of correspondence, with the reporters getting a credit line. Also a "letterbag" to which writers are invited to give their reactions to the articles or activities. It's a "lay leaders' trade paper", it states.

Christian Writes' Conference and Workshop, % CHRISTIAN LIFE, 434 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Ill. This is 6th annual. Jan. 28-30. There's to be a \$50 prize contest.

Intolerance in High Places! A writer told us recently that she has discovered there is "unfortunately a number of Protestant editors, who won't publish your mss. if you are published in Catholic magazines. And Catholic editors who will have none of you if you appear in Protestant magazines."

REWRITE is aware that a small number, a minority, do practice this kind of narrow minded sectarianism that would have been entirely an anathema to Jesus Christ. I believe that the great majority of Catholic & Protestant editors are as contemptuous of such policies as we are. They applaud a writer able to bring the full sweep of reverence & tolerant faith to his own writing. They realize, as every mature person will, that such writers are better witnesses to the true wisdom of God, and only require that the author be accurate in his representation of their doctrines while he writes for them.

The good writer will soon discover that he is better off if he crosses these narrow editors off his list. Why waste time on them?

## REWRITE

### NEWS OF MEMBERS OF THE WCS FAMILY

Here is a very nice compliment paid by one friend of ours to another. And the best part of it is that it defines very neatly one of the secret attributes of truly great writing. One can learn a whole bookful about writing from its epigrammatic comment.

Mary P. Hamlin, author of "Alexander Hamilton," the stage play which George Arliss, distinguished English character actor starred in, said of Eleanore M. Jewett's book of Korean folk tales, "Which Was Witch?": that "Eleanore keeps the magic and writes with apparent simplicity—a great thing to be able to do. She does long research but never informs you!"

The italics are ours. How difficult it is to be impromptu and artless about the facts one has sweat blood to acquire! So many authors stop their stories while they lecture their readers, or point didactically at the blackboard while they check off their vital premises. Eleanore never does that. Perhaps another fine compliment is the fact that although this book is written for older children than Billy, he has listened enthralled at all the stories we have so far read him.

Members of the WCS Family will also be delighted to know that in Canandaigua, N. Y., Eleanore Jewett has begun an adult education course in writing, and has on her first try attracted a record enrollment of 34, including even several business paper writers. She has much to give.

The field of juvenile writing has lost one of its best practitioners in the death of another long term member of the WCS Family. I refer to Marguerite Dickson, whose "Junior" novels are extremely well liked. She, too, taught an informal workshop group. She had helped this circle of writers, several were members of the WCS Family, to publish a total of 28 books. That is good teaching! Elva and I are very proud, yet humble, whenever the number of teachers of writing, editors and agents, as well as writers, whom we have helped either through WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE or REWRITE is occasionally emphasized for us by current events. The WCS Family is a truly remarkable one.

Catherine C. Perry, long a member of the WCS Family, has become an assoc. prof. at Emerson College and acting chairman of a Speech Therapy Dept. that is newly organized, with the Sam. D. Robbins Speech Clinic as a special interest.

Lillian Everts, another member, has won a prize publication of her poems from The Lantern. She is active in promoting an interest in poetry. The WCS Scholarship Fund to help handicapped and shut-in writers is grateful to her for a gift to its permanent funds.

POETRY Magazine gave REWRITE very favorable reportorial mention in its. Nov. issue.

### A POETRY GROUP'S CONTEST

PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY, Mrs. Blanche W. Keysner, 213 So. 20th St., Harrisburg, Pa., is offering its usual prizes in contests open to members. These are for lyrics, quatrains (humorous or serious), blank verse. In addition, Col. Henry W. Shoemaker, 1st V.P., offers a prize for the best poem on a Penn. Indian Captivity theme. Closes: Mar. 15 1954.

Three new chapters of the Society have opened: New Castle, Beaver County and Selin grove Chapters.

### AN EDITOR ASKS QUESTIONS

Loring Williams offered his poet students at the UNH Conference last summer a good set of questions with which to cross-examine and check themselves before sending a poem out. Here are the 16 challenges:

- (1) Was this experience worth recording—in poetry?
- (2) Does it arouse emotion?
- (3) Rhythm: does it establish a definite "expectancy"?
- (4) Is the expectancy satisfied? Or pleasantly disappointed?
- (5) Is the meter suited to the thought? Is it monotonous? Is it varied?
- (6) Is there too much rhyme? Too little? Are the rhymes interesting?
- (7) Is the succession of sounds melodic?
- (8) Is there a thrifty use of words?
- (9) Is the meaning clear? Ambiguous? Obscure?
- (10) Is the story overtold?
- (11) Does the poem "report" or "reveal"?
- (12) Does it have satisfactory figures of speech?
- (13) Is this poetry or rhythmic prose?
- (14) Does the poem stay within its frame?
- (15) Does it have an adequate title?
- (16) Is the punctuation correct?

These are certainly all good questions. I am sure that so discriminating an editor as Loring asks himself many more when he writes or accepts a poem. Having known him for many years and having read Elva's workshops regularly, I think I could ask a few more that could make poets uncomfortable.

### \$5,000 TOP PRIZE FOR A CONFESSION

TRUE STORY, 205 E. 42nd St., NYC 17, has announced its 4th annual contest for "true" (confessions) stories. This contest will be conducted by four of the Macfadden Group, & prizes total \$40,000. The magazines include also TRUE ROMANCE, TRUE EXPERIENCE and TRUE LOVE. Full details in all of these books in the February issue (on sale Jan. 8th.) Contest closes in April, 1954.

Bob Gilleran writes: "Since the heart of a true story is an emotional problem, writers will be expected to tell the story of their own lives or someone they know well. All entrants remain anonymous, but success in this contest has started many writers in the past



on a profitable career." He further says in this announcement that while "the contest aim is to develop new material, and new writers, for the hundreds of true stories, which appear in these monthly magazines, it provides an unusual opportunity for writers who wish to crash the professional ranks." That would seem to dispose of the once cherished illusion that, being anonymous, these histories are written exclusively by those whose similes and whose hearts are heavy.

CHILDREN'S PLAYCRAFT, Harold Schwartz, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., NYC 17, is a new magazine, featuring activities for children 8 to 12 & attempting to "develop creative abilities," as against "passive participation. In learning such crafts as woodcraft, metalcraft, paper- and plastic craft, they will develop hobbies that will make them better adjusted adults."

Simple tools, easily accessible materials and explicit diagrams and directions are to be emphasized. A kind of juvenile version of POPULAR MECHANICS, I believe, is what is being aimed at. Magic tricks for group entertainment and "games played with home-made & household objects like milk cartons and sewing spools" will also be used. In every issue "there will also be a complete section, on a single hobby and a team project to give parents an opportunity to share their children's interests." Thus, photography, in the first issue, and directions for a father and son to make an ice boat, are examples. The new magazine, one of the Parents' Institute is being published bi-monthly.

The Federal Trade Commission has accepted a consent settlement from 6 manufacturers of blotting paper (covering 90% of the available supply), intended to stop price-fixing. (A consent settlement means that respondents agree to the Commission's findings & order, without "admitting or denying having engaged in acts or practices violative of law"... Almost always when prices have been "fixed", the buying public has to pay a higher price than if free competition existed among producers of the goods. Usually, (in this case, The Blotting Paper Manufacturers' Association) a central trade organization is the medium by which uniformity of prices is gained.)

By no stretch of the imagination would it be considered price-fixing or "restraint of trade" for writers to stand together to demand more business-like handling of mss. by all editors. Writers, like the buying public suffer from being a large mass of disorganized persons. If any man could come up with a workable formula for uniting either writers or the buying public, he would be doing a large segment of his fellow men a service that would be praised and remembered for all time.

The world needs more ways for people to be of service to one another. Not ways for one group to get more profit from another.

#### FAREWELL TO MOTHER ALICE

It was a beautiful sky blue Indian summer afternoon the day we laid my mother's ashes to rest in the little family burial plot in South Berwick, Maine. The hay meadow, green and well tilled, was still full of birds and their sweet songs. The Rev. Craig Richards, the minister of the Federated Church, of which Mother Alice was a member in her youth, read a simple service.

Afterwards, Billy helped Mr. Ham plant an enormous clump of bright yellow chrysanthemums on the grave. It lies beneath a towering pine and close beside the two weathered stones of Mother Alice's beloved parents, my grandparents. By a curiously happy chance a member of the WCS Family, Miss Ethel M. Eaton, whose profession is writing about flowers & other garden topics, is keeping a loving eye on the "mums". Living just across the winding country road, her view from her porch overlooks the cemetery, which she once visited in company with my mother. I think there is a soft smile and twinkle of appreciation in my mother's eye for that sort of kindness. She believed in the idea of the WCS Family.

I am deeply grateful for the many friendly and heart-warming letters we have received from members of the WCS Family expressing sympathy. They have served to underline the fact of which we were already fairly certain, that the WCS Family is indeed a real family.

#### WHAT ABOUT SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSION?

Some time ago the AMERICAN WRITER, publication of the Authors' League of America, undertook a round-robin on article outlines. A primary fact that showed up is that 25 magazine editors disapproved unanimously of the practice of simultaneous submission of outlines to more than one editor. They believe this procedure unethical; they don't like a custom requiring them to consider and often consult on an idea that may eventually sell to a competing editor. REWRITE'S feeling is that professional authors simply do not try to hawk big ideas for slick books in such a way, and we doubt if it's worthwhile for an author, or editor, to circularize on a smaller article.

The special attraction a writer has to offer editors, even more than ideas, is his unique presentation. His style, his enthusiasm, reportorial ability and philosophy. A writer who tries to put these on an assembly line and increase production too much, or to sell by the impersonal mail-order method, is discounting greatly his best selling quality. Editors and readers always like to feel that the words they consume have the freshness of a clean, cool head of iceberg lettuce. That they are not shopworn. Moreover, to spread one's ideas around is to invite a competitor to sneak in and snatch in a perfectly legitimate manner your ideas. Ideas are not copyrightable. Why give them away?

## REWRITE

### THERE IS ART IN A GOOD OPENING

How smart are you at beginning a story? I read a story the other day that technically appeared to be all right. But it lacked one of the basic ingredients, human interest, a sense of color, warmth and strong emotional drive. I didn't care two cents whether I read it or not. And that is of course fatal. If you can't excite the reader to the pitch of enthusiasm, which makes him exclaim: "Golly, I've simply got to finish this one," you've failed in your mission. You won't pull down a check.

That story set me thinking. It made me recall a remark of Arthur Sullivan Hoffman. A writer can't afford to be able to do just a single thing well. The good story-teller, he said, can do a number of tricks well at the same time. That is very true of the beginning of a story. And so that is why the opening is so difficult; why professionals tell us they spend most of their time on a start and when they have that right, the rest almost writes itself. That, naturally, simplifies the problem of telling a story; nevertheless, there is some truth to it. So, let us see for ourselves some of the good characteristics that ought to be built into the effective beginning.

First, there should be a striking MC. One of my students kidded me recently because I insisted that she make her MCs more appealing. Actually, I don't insist on that. There has been a trend lately, chiefly due to the preoccupation of the movies and radio with a type of gangster mug or moll MC. The cynical, brutal tone that passes for "realism", is all right, if that's what your editor is looking for. But it serves best only in the "perfect crime" type of short story. Readers have a strange predilection of desiring to identify themselves with the MC. And so, some readers have a not unnatural dislike of imagining that they are horrible or despicable characters. But whether your MC is appealing or not, he should at least be striking and out of the ordinary. The reader has a right to expect something unusual, out of the ordinary. That's the first job.

Next, you have to give the MC a background against which he lives. Too many stories in ms. are formless and vague with respect to a locale. Some of them do not even mention it! This is a by-product of the failure of many inexperienced writers to write in definite, clean-cut scenes. The warm appreciative appeal of a particular place, sometimes viewed nostalgically, can exert almost as strong an effect on readers as a viable MC. It is worth striving for.

Another important characteristic of a good opening is an intriguing problem. A great, great many writers tell us they do not like to write about problems. Probably because a problem hits them every other minute in real life. But, I can assure you, nothing makes a

reader yawn so quickly as a story that pictures only "pleasant" things and hasn't any dramatic crises. The basic root of an effective narrative hook is a strange, puzzling, provocative problem. The old gag about some poor devil holding on to a cliff with nothing but his fingernails, is a true one. The reader is going to stop, look and watch until he satisfies his curiosity and lust for excitement.

But a problem alone is not enough. A great scientist or mathematician could pose problems that would be marvels of ingenuity, but they would not make the average lay reader, I am afraid, look twice. There must be conflict. Two characters struggling. Notice I said "struggling", not just fighting or using a hatchet on each other. There must always be some significance for the reader in the fight. Just a couple of surly pugs isn't a subject of interest for long. That is why the well thought out problem story is often eagerly sought after by editors. Take a subject such as socialized medicine. If all of the characters symbolize different points of view and defend or attack the idea of medical security administered by the State, you will have an exciting intellectual problem.

But even this kind of a problem that fits the experience of the reader and with which he can identify himself, may not be enough. There are two further characteristics which an author should give to his opening. Readers like to feel strongly about a story. If the MC does not show a strong drive, or desire to achieve the goal the author sets out for him, how can the reader feel that way? I read a lot of ms. in which the MC faces his problem apathetically. It is stated clearly but there is no motivated drive, and therefore the reader is not excited intellectually, nor stirred with curiosity.

The second characteristic is emotion. If the MC's motivation is not backed up with a strongly projected emotion, no amount of intellectual curiosity and suspense alone will hook the reader. That is why it is very important to use warm emotional words. You've got to sell the reader through his emotional reactions. If you don't stir your reader you will never get him to read the remainder of the story. It does no good for you to feel the story, if you don't make the reader feel it, too.

From all of these separate elements which I have discussed, you can readily see a beginning to a story is a very complex thing. So is the writing of fiction for commercial magazines, yet many writers rush in and try to sell to them on practically an "ad libbing" basis. How can they expect to be seriously considered when they themselves don't take their job seriously? To write a really good opening is to make a minor masterpiece, whatever the intrinsic value of the story or its eventual importance. Because even mediocre stories contain good technical tricks.

## REWRITE

### BE WISE, BE CAREFUL AND GENEROUS!

A reader consulted us recently concerning a plagiarism charge lodged against her. We don't like that. In the WGS Family over the years we have been singularly fortunate. Only two cases have arisen in the approximately 25 years I have advised writers. But we go on the theory that writers, like Caesar's wife, should be above suspicion.

There is one simple rule to follow in order to avoid any taint of plagiarism. Don't use the other fellow's ideas. And remember, it is possible, so far as an editor is concerned, for a writer to plagiarize himself! Many writers think it smart to get ahold of one idea and milk it dry. That is, to write a series of articles about say, "How to Make Money At Home" for the SEP. READERS' DIGEST, LHW. FARM JOURNAL, PROFITABLE HOBBIES, etc.

The point is, however, that while each of those magazines is in a different category, so to speak, and hence in a sense non-competitive with any of the others, they all have overlapping circulations. If you start publishing a string of similar articles, which all appear within a period of a few months, let us say, in that group of magazines, you will certainly hear from the editors. What is more, whether they can prove you've plagiarized yourself or not, they will be reluctant to accept further material from you.

We have advised writers in the past, once they have invested considerable time in research, to make use of the material they've gathered to the fullest possible extent. By that we mean of course, to slant successive articles for different magazines. Or let one plot idea suggest a related, but quite different one. For instance, if you write on a theme about the old girl friend coming back into a man's life, do the first one from the girl's angle, the next from the wife's, the man's, or change the setting and the conditions of the plot so radically that readers won't recognize it is the same idea at all.

In my experience as a reporter and feature writer I once had three markets that enjoyed a healthy interest in the same material. I made a good deal of small money by slanting common ideas all three ways. But frankly the second and third rewrites were never the best pieces I did. And I found early in this kind of writing that (1) it was necessary to do more research; or (2) forget the idea until it became a new story to me, and I could bring it all the enthusiasm of that first time through. Frankly, again, I think there are so many ideas lying around a writer is likely to do better to think up really new ideas than to try to dress up familiar ones in new faces and gowns.

I do not know the full circumstances as I write this in the plagiarism case mentioned above. I have only an outraged editor's word for it that an article used in his magazine

reappeared in another a considerable period later in "almost the same words". The author of the disputed piece has declared to me: (1) she saw the first article, decided that she would write about the same subject; (2) she consulted an encyclopaedia and separate sources; (3) then using her notes, she did a piece of her own. Finally, (4) she submitted it to another magazine in the same general field.

This, I submit, is extremely dangerous, a practice no writer should take risks with. A writer under these circumstances, with good motives, the best in the world, is extremely likely to "remember" in his subconscious self the words of the other chap. Certainly, no editor wants to use an article on an identically similar theme the same year the subject is covered by a competing magazine. In such a case even complete originality is scarcely enough. I know of at least one author who rumor has it has lost several markets because he has followed other writers, and himself, around too closely.

What do you do if a charge of plagiarism, true or false, is levelled against you? You should take it very seriously. Remember the saying of Shakespeare concerning the difference between stealing the "trash" of a person's pocketbook and the irreplaceable treasure of his good name? A false charge is legally actionable. It requires an apology or redress for libel. Both of these are difficult to get publicly at times; but should be pressed for wherever there is justification.

If you are guilty of plagiarism, intended or unintentional, you should at once undertake careful reparation. You should write a letter to the editor and author you've hurt, expressing regret. You should also write to the editor to whom you have sold an unoriginal piece, explaining as fully and fairly as possible the circumstances. You should seek to clear your good name as decisively as it is possible to do. Everyone makes mistakes. Judgment is one of the last forms of intellect we develop, because it depends so much upon maturity and perspective. We do things in youth we would not think of doing in later life, because we do not fully understand all of the circumstances or consequences.

That is why it is well to develop quickly a good climate and background that will aid you in moments of misunderstanding. And above all, develop your own ideas & style.

PLEASE NOTE: when you move, give us & your post office your new address in advance. It costs us 3¢ now on each copy of REWRITE returned to us by the Post Office. And then some of you expect us apparently to pay another 3¢ to mail you a fresh copy to the new address. When we can find it. Which means a first class mail note to you. That is a total of 15¢ to deliver one issue, not to mention time and other overhead. You could have another issue of REWRITE for what this costs



## REWRITE

### LEARN THIS LESSON EARLY

Two of the most important factors in either fiction or non-fiction writing are: line of interest and projection of emotion. Without these your idea will simply not jell or affect the reader. I gather from reading many mss. that large numbers of inexperienced or beginning writers have little feeling for a continuity of thought and emotion in pieces which they themselves write. That is a reason for pulling apart published stories and articles, and even poems, essays. Study how the author gets from one place in his ms. to the next. In point of time, space, idea and emotion.

Line of interest or continuity is what it implies: a continuation of interest. If you say: "The little dog is brown. Rocks become pebbles, when broken up by a stone-crusher," you don't have two consecutive thoughts, i. e., thoughts that are inter-connected, growing out of each other. On the other hand, if you say: "The little dog is brown; the little dog barked," you have a very crude succession of ideas that are tied together.

It is just like stage dialect, which must always depend for its effect on one actor's speech leading into that of the next. In a highly sophisticated comedy this doesn't always mean in an absolutely literal sense. A character may say something that doesn't appear to have any relation to what was over-seriously pontificated, say, in the preceding speech. That is because the author made a bridge through irony. But the bridge must always be there. The author leads his reader forward—like fire eating its way along a fuse. The progress must be continuous, not a jump here and there with holes in between.

Emotion depends almost exclusively upon a reader getting a visual picture and feeling strongly about it. But you have got to make him feel. It does no good to say: "Mary was going to have a baby. The ruthless man said cruelly: 'I don't care. I'm going to run away to Florida.'" The chances are you might, just possibly get a laugh, or snicker. But if you set up the situation and then permit Mary to react, you will get a different response. "Oh, John! You can't leave me now!.. Besides, I love you!" It's still close to a melodramatic scene, because the emotion you stir up is pathos, pity. There is little individual characterization of the 2 people.. But the cry is what any stunned woman would utter. And it echoes in the heart of a reader to the degree he or she has visualized a situation of being left helpless and alone, facing the mysterious and unknown.

The secret of conveying emotion lies in an appropriate choice of words. Not adjectives that "tell" the reader didactically just exactly how he is supposed to feel. But rather words that convey ideas to him. You allow him to use his mind, imagination and senses. You touch off the explosive force of a sen-

sory reaction in his muscles; his eyes, ears, nose, mouth, fingers, skin. You make him identify himself with another person. And in his own right feel what would happen to his flesh, if the same thing happened to him that is happening to the MC or whoever it is. (And note the tense I have just used: the "present", not some variation of the past. In a story we use the simple past tense, but it's always present in the mind of the reader.) A sound like the "crackle" of fire, or "patter" of little feet, or rain. They stir your reader profoundly.

There are three points to note about what I have just said. I will take them in order. First, memory and imagination are your best weapons. You are digging down into the subconscious of your reader. You are not writing for him individually; it isn't possible in a magazine read by thousands. You cannot tell whether your reader has ever experienced the terrors, let us say, of fire at night in the country. If he has, that's all to the good, unless he crosses all his "t"s & dots all his "i"s, in which case he may not permit imagination to function.

What you are doing is to stir the latent, the potential reservoir of feeling, which a reader gradually builds up. Folk tales have a powerful hold because they have grown and developed in this way out of the common experience. What the memory cannot dredge up, imagination can. You yourself do not necessarily need to have seen a farmhouse burn. A writer can use his imagination and see what would be likely to happen. If we are really good, we tell a story so one who has seen it actually happen, tells us, who haven't, that we must have been writing from acquaintance with the facts. But we are simply trading a little dishonestly on memory and imagination—the readers and our own!

Second, this points to the value of rubber-stamp phrases. I used several of them, one in two separate directions, up above. In a prose piece it is bad technique to use some phrases that have been overworked. For example, I am getting very tired of hearing on the radio that tortured cliché: "That I would like to see." But when you are trying to do a story, you need to use phrases that will, quickly and easily, make your reader react. That is why Westerns fall so much on a special language about "six-guns", hombres, how Jed "sawed at the reins", etc., etc. Or the airplane pilot can establish a mood immediately by "gunning" his motor.

A lot of this gibberish is phoney & silly to anyone who knows the real thing. But the third point is not to be too quick to write your own symbols. Charles H. Woodbury, great marine painter, used to tell his pupils that it never did any good to use symbols so obscure a spectator could not "read" them. In some way many amateur writers defeat a story's purpose themselves simply by torturing themselves trying to say "he said" originally!